

«UML»'99 Preface

“While in geometry attempts to square the circle never succeeded, the UML has achieved it: states can be implemented as classes.” – “We have made much progress from the time clouds were used.”

The Unified Modeling Language is described as a language for “specifying, visualizing, constructing, and documenting the artifacts of software systems” and for business modeling (OMG UML V1.x documents). The UML reflects some of the best experiences in object-oriented modeling, thus it has the potential to become a widely-used standard object-oriented modeling language.

As a generally-applicable standard the UML has to be both flexible (extensible, adaptable, modifiable) and precise. Flexibility is needed if the UML is to be used in a variety of application domains. Tailoring of UML syntax and adaptation of UML semantics to system domains is highly-desirable. Incorporating domain-specific concepts into the language will yield modeling languages that more effectively support system development in these domains. Tailoring may involve determining a subset of the UML that is applicable to the domain, extending or modifying existing language elements, or defining new language elements. One can envisage UML variants that are tailored to specific domains, for example, UML for real-time systems, multimedia systems, and for internet-based systems. Furthermore, one can also define UML variants that determine levels of sophistication in the use of the UML. For example, one can define a “UML-Light” that utilizes basic UML concepts, a “UML-Advanced” that utilizes more advanced concepts, and a “UML-Expert” that uses concepts that require substantial experiences in the use of the UML. In this respect, one can consider the UML to be a family of languages rather than a single, coherent language.

As in the case of natural languages, one does not need to understand the full language before one can express oneself. Consequently, lightweight versions for different purposes are needed, but extensions of the UML beyond stereotypes and tagged-values wherever necessary should be considered in the future. In the fields of business modeling, timed and analogous systems, as well as architectural descriptions, enhancements will surely come, perhaps bringing new specialized kinds of diagrams into the UML.

Precision is needed if the UML is to effectively serve as a standard. A precise language supports effective communication of intent and enables the development of rigorous analysis tools. Work on developing precise semantics for the UML is the main thrust of UML research in academia. The development of a pragmatic and precise semantics for the UML requires both technical and social processes. It is imperative that the semantics support a common-sense usage of the UML in practice. It is not good enough to propose a precise semantics in a formal notation. One must also demonstrate that the proposed semantics

supports commonly held views of how the UML is to be applied and that is consistent with widely-perceived successful industrial applications of the language. Furthermore, the semantics should give tool-developers sufficient insights that supports the development of semantic analysis tools.

The flexibility and precision qualities may seem at odds with each other. Regarding UML as a family of languages suggests that there cannot be a single precise UML semantics. On the other hand, the multiple languages must have a common language core if they are to be considered UML variants and not new languages. Work on defining a precise semantics for the UML should focus on (1) identifying this core, (2) developing precise characterizations of the core concepts, and (3) developing mechanisms that can be used to extend and modify the core semantics to support the tailoring of the UML to different usages and domains.

Balancing the demands for UML extensions and adaptations with the need to consolidate and unify concepts to create a coherent standard will be a major challenge as the UML evolves. Both forces can contribute significantly to the development of the UML only if appropriately balanced. Demands for extensions and adaptations can be analyzed together to identify common concepts that can be usefully and consistently added to a UML core, but identifying common concepts and determining the consistency of new concepts with existing standard UML concepts are challenging activities.

The evolution of the UML can benefit significantly from the best experiences in other computer science communities. Experiences that can be exploited in the development of the UML include work on conceptual modeling and knowledge engineering in the Artificial Intelligence community, work on rigorous/formal software development in the Software Engineering community, work on data modeling in the Database community, and work on denotational and operational semantics, type theories, and higher-level programming languages in the Programming Language community. For example, it is conceivable that one can use a sub-language of the UML as a higher-level programming language, thus paving the way for the use of the UML as a wide-spectrum development language.

Closely linked to UML issues are questions related to how and where to use and apply it. Current interest in methodical issues and the definition of development processes reflects this awareness. Methods-in-the-Large and project management issues are rather well elaborated, and the “methods in the small” will receive far more attention in the future. We need more techniques that allow composing or refining of the various kinds of diagram types, translate between them, and trace information across diagrams. Proprietary solutions for some techniques are coded in the tools, and need scientific examination to allow further improvement.

We are waiting for the day when the (core) UML will be regarded as a semantically sound and precise language.

The objective of the «UML»'99 conference is to bring together researchers and developers from academia and industry, and from a variety of computer science communities, to present and discuss works that can potentially contribute to the evolution of the UML. In particular, the «UML»'99 conference aims to foster closer working relationships between researchers and developers in industry and researchers in academia. As indicated above, the successful evolution of the UML will require theoretical and industry-driven contributions. Past work on the UML provides ample evidence that concepts developed in academia can be effectively interwoven with practical experiences. The intent of the UML conferences is to enhance such interactions by providing an open forum for discussing and analyzing theoretical and practical challenges facing the development of the UML.

In keeping with the scientific orientation of «UML»'99, the conference is primarily structured around paper presentations and discussion panels. The presentations and panels are targeted to an audience that is at least familiar with the basic elements of the UML, and has a significant interest in the development of the UML as a well-founded standard. In total 166 papers were submitted to the «UML»'99 conference, of which 44 were selected by the Programme Committee for presentation. The selected papers touch upon a variety of issues and reflect numerous perspectives on how the UML should evolve. The concerns and issues mentioned above, and more, are addressed in varying degrees in the selected papers.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the authors of submitted papers, the Programme Committee members, those committee members who also acted as shepherds for some of the papers, the external referees, Ljiljana Döhring for handling of the paper printing process, Adrian Bunk for setting up and handling the electronic submission process, and Matthias Rahlf for setting up the web page for the electronic Programme Committee meeting. We would also like to thank the numerous people who have been involved in the organization of «UML»'99 and, in particular the organizers of the last-year conference in Mulhouse, Jean Bézivin and Pierre-Alain Muller for their helpful advice, the Publicity Chairs, in particular Jean-Michel Bruel for maintaining the mailing list, the Poster Chair, Jim Bieman, and the Conference Coordinator, Kathy Krell, who kept all the pieces together and made the organization a much smoother process. We would also like to thank the IEEE-CS conference support staff for their invaluable help.

September 1999

Robert France, Bernhard Rumpe
«UML»'99 Conference and Programme Chairs

Organisation

«UML»'99 was organized by Robert France from the Department of Computer Science at Colorado State University, and by Bernhard Rumpe from the Computer Science Department at the Technische Universität München, under the auspices of IEEE Computer Society Technical Committee on Complexity in Computing, and in cooperation with ACM SIGSOFT and SIGPLAN (Association for Computing Machinery, Special Interest Group for Software Engineering, Special Interest Group on Programming Languages).

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OMG (The Object Management Group), <http://www.omg.org/>. UML is a trademark of OMG.

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Table of Contents

Invited Talk 1 (Abstract)

Architecting Web-based Systems with the Unified Modeling Language	1
<i>Grady Booch</i>	

Software Architecture

Extending Architectural Representation in UML with View Integration . . .	2
<i>Alexander Egyed, Nenad Medvidovic</i>	
Enabling the Refinement of a Software Architecture into a Design	17
<i>Marwan Abi-Antoun, Nenad Medvidovic</i>	
Using the UML for Architectural Description	32
<i>Rich Hilliard</i>	

UML and Other Notations

Viewing the OML as a Variant of the UML	49
<i>Brian Henderson-Sellers, Colin Atkinson, Don Firesmith</i>	
A Comparison of the Business Object Notation and the Unified Modeling Language	67
<i>Richard F. Paige, Johnathan S. Ostroff</i>	
Formalizing the UML class diagram using Object-Z	83
<i>Soon-Kyeong Kim, David Carrington</i>	

Formalizing Interactions

A Formal Approach to Collaborations in the Unified Modeling Language . .	99
<i>Gunnar Övergaard</i>	
A Formal Semantics for UML Interactions	116
<i>Alexander Knapp</i>	

Panel 1

UML 2.0 Architectural Crossroads: Sculpting or Mudpacking?	131
<i>Moderator: Chris Kobryn</i>	
<i>Michael Jesse Chonoles, Steve Cook, Desmond D'Souza, Sridhar Iyengar, Guus Ramackers</i>	

Meta-Modeling

- Core Meta-Modelling Semantics of UML: The pUML Approach 140
Andy Evans, Stuart Kent
- A Metamodel for OCL 156
Mark Richters, Martin Gogolla

Tools

- Tool-Supported Compressing of UML Class Diagrams 172
Ferenc Dósa Rácz, Kai Koskimies
- A Pragmatic Approach for Building a User-friendly and Flexible UML
 Model Repository 188
Mariano Belaunde

Components

- Modeling Dynamic Software Components in UML 204
Axel Wienberg, Florian Matthes, Marko Boger
- Extending UML for Modeling Reflective Software Components 220
Junichi Suzuki, Yoshikazu Yamamoto

UML Extension Mechanisms

- Nine Suggestions for Improving UML Extensibility 236
Nathan Dykman, Martin Griss, Robert Kessler
- A Classification of Stereotypes for Object-Oriented Modeling Languages . . 249
Stefan Berner, Martin Glinz, Stefan Joos
- First-Class Extensibility for UML - Packaging of Profiles, Stereotypes, Pat-
 terns 265
Desmond D'Souza, Aamod Sane, Alan Birchenough

Process Modeling

- UML-based Fusion Analysis 279
Shane Sendall, Alfred Strohmeier
- Using UML for Modelling the Static Part of a Software Process 293
Xavier Franch, Josep M. Ribó
- Framework for Describing UML Compatible Development Processes 309
Pavel Hruby

Invited Talk 2

- On the Behavior of Complex Object-Oriented Systems 325
David Harel

Real-Time Systems

- UML-RT as a Candidate for Modeling Embedded Real-Time Systems in
the Telecommunication Domain 331
Dominikus Herzberg

- Modeling Hard Real Time Systems with UML – The OOHARTS Approach 340
Laila Kabous, Wolfgang Nebel

- UML Based Performance Modeling Framework for Object-Oriented Dis-
tributed Systems 357
Pekka Kähkipuro

Constraint Languages

- Defining the Context of OCL Expressions 373
Steve Cook, Anneke Kleppe, Richard Mitchell, Jos Warmer, Alan Wills

- Mixing Visual and Textual Constraint Languages 385
Stuart Kent, John Howse

- Correct Realizations of Interface Constraints with OCL 400
Michel Bidoit, Rolf Hennicker, Françoise Tort, Martin Wirsing

Analyzing UML Models 1

- Generating Tests from UML Specifications 417
Jeff Offutt, Aynur Abdurazik

- Formalising UML State Machines for Model Checking 431
Johan Lilius, Iván Porres Paltor

Panel 2

- SDL as UML: Why and What 447
Moderator: Bran Selic
Philippe Dhaussy, Anders Ek, Øystein Haugen, Philippe Leblanc, Birger
Møller-Pedersen

Coding 1

UML Behavior: Inheritance and Implementation in Current Object-Oriented Languages	458
<i>Jean Louis Sourrouille</i>	

UML Collaboration Diagrams and their Transformation to Java	474
<i>Gregor Engels, Roland Hücking, Stefan Sauer, Annika Wagner</i>	

Analyzing UML Models 2

Towards Three-Dimensional Representation and Animation of UML Diagrams	490
<i>Martin Gogolla, Oliver Radfelder, Mark Richters</i>	

Typechecking UML Static Models	504
<i>Tony Clark</i>	

Precise Behavioral Modeling

Analysing UML Use Cases as Contracts	519
<i>Ralph-Johan Back, Luigia Petre, Iván Porres Paltor</i>	

Closing the Gap Between Object-Oriented Modeling of Structure and Behavior	535
<i>Holger Giese, Jörg Graf, Guido Wirtz</i>	

Static Modeling

Black and White Diamonds	551
<i>Brian Henderson-Sellers, Franck Barbier</i>	

Interconnecting Objects via Contracts	567
<i>Luís Filipe Andrade, José Luiz Fiadeiro</i>	

How can a subsystem be both a package and a classifier?	585
<i>Joaquin Miller, Rebecca Wirfs-Brock</i>	

Applying the UML

Using UML/OCL Constraints for Relational Database Design	599
<i>Birgit Demuth, Heinrich Hussmann</i>	

Towards a UML Extension for Hypermedia Design	615
<i>Hubert Baumeister, Nora Koch, Luis Mandel</i>	

Why Unified is not Universal? – UML Shortcomings for Coping with Round-trip Engineering	631
<i>Serge Demeyer, Stéphane Ducasse, Sander Tichelaar</i>	

Sequence Diagrams

Timed Sequence Diagrams and Tool-Based Analysis – A Case Study 646
*Thomas Firley, Michaela Huhn, Karsten Diethers, Thomas Gehrke,
Ursula Goltz*

Timing Analysis of UML Sequence Diagrams 662
Xuandong Li, Johan Lilius

Coding 2

The Normal Object Form: Bridging the Gap from Models to Code 676
Christian Bunse, Colin Atkinson

Modeling Exceptional Behavior 692
Neelam Soundarajan, Stephen Fridella

Panel 3

Advanced Methods and Tools for a Precise UML 707
*Moderator: Andy Evans
Steve Cook, Steve Mellor, Jos Warmer, Alan Wills*

Author Index

- Abdurazik, Aynur, 417
Abi-Antoun, Marwan, 17
Andrade, Luís Filipe, 567
Atkinson, Colin, 49, 676
- Back, Ralph-Johan, 519
Barbier, Franck, 551
Baumeister, Hubert, 615
Belaunde, Mariano, 188
Berner, Stefan, 249
Bidiot, Michel, 400
Birchenough, Alan, 265
Boger, Marko, 204
Booch, Grady, 1
Boulestin, Michel, 447
Bunse, Christian, 676
- Carrington, David, 83
Champeau, Joel, 447
Chonoles, Michael Jesse, 131
Clark, Tony, 504
Cook, Steve, 131, 373, 707
- D'Souza, Desmond, 131, 265
Demeyer, Serge, 631
Demuth, Birgit, 599
Dhaussy, Philippe, 447
Diethers, Karsten, 646
Ducasse, Stéphane, 631
Dykman, Nathan, 236
- Egyed, Alexander, 2
Ek, Anders, 447
Engels, Gregor, 474
Evans, Andy, 140, 707
- Fiadeiro, José Luiz, 567
Firesmith, Don, 49
Firley, Thomas, 646
Franch, Xavier, 293
Fridella, Stephen, 692
- Gehrke, Thomas, 646
Giese, Holger, 535
Glinz, Martin, 249
Gogolla, Martin, 156, 490
- Goltz, Ursula, 646
Graf, Jörg, 535
Griss, Martin, 236
- Harel, David, 325
Haugen, Øystein, 447
Henderson-Sellers, Brian, 49, 551
Hennicker, Rolf, 400
Herzberg, Dominikus, 331
Hilliard, Rich, 32
Howse, John, 385
Hruby, Pavel, 309
Huhn, Michaela, 646
Husmann, Heinrich, 599
Hücking, Roland, 474
- Iyengar, Sridhar, 131
- Joos, Stefan, 249
- Kabous, Laila, 340
Kent, Stuart, 140, 385
Kessler, Robert, 236
Kim, Soon-Kyeong, 83
Kleppe, Anneke, 373
Knapp, Alexander, 116
Kobryn, Chris, 131
Koch, Nora, 615
Koskimies, Kai, 172
Kähkipuro, Pekka, 357
- Leblanc, Philippe, 447
Li, Xuandong, 662
Lilius, Johan, 431, 662
- Mandel, Luis, 615
Matthes, Florian, 204
Medvidovic, Nenad, 2, 17
Mellor, Steve, 707
Miller, Joaquin, 585
Mitchell, Richard, 373
Møller-Pedersen, Birger, 447
- Nebel, Wolfgang, 340
- Offutt, Jeff, 417

Ostroff, Johnathan S., 67
Övergaard, Gunnar, 99

Paige, Richard F., 67
Petre, Luigia, 519
Porres Paltor, Iván, 431, 519

Radfelder, Oliver, 490
Ramackers, Guus, 131
Ribó, Josep M., 293
Richters, Mark, 156, 490
Rácz, Ferenc Dósa, 172

Sane, Aamod, 265
Sauer, Stefan, 474
Selic, Bran, 447
Sendall, Shane, 279
Soundarajan, Neelam, 692

Sourrouille, Jean Louis, 458
Strohmeier, Alfred, 279
Suzuki, Junichi, 220

Tichelaar, Sander, 631
Tort, Françoise, 400

Wagner, Annika, 474
Warmer, Jos, 373, 707
Weigert, Thomas, 447
Wienberg, Axel, 204
Wills, Alan, 373, 707
Wirfs-Brock, Rebecca, 585
Wirsing, Martin, 400
Wirtz, Guido, 535

Yamamoto, Yoshikazu, 220